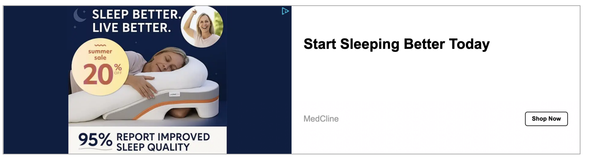

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HEALTH CARE

Protesters rip Biden on COVID: 'Pandemic is not over'

BY OLAFIMIHAN OSHIN - 09/19/22 8:03 PM ET

John Zangas/DCMediaGroup

A group of protesters suffering from long-term COVID-19 symptoms demonstrated outside of the White House on Monday, calling out President Biden for his remarks saying the COVID-19 pandemic is "over"

Biden's comments were made in an interview on CBS's "60 Minutes" that aired Sunday.

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The nonprofit MEAction Network organized the protest outside the White House, in which demonstrators — some who suffer from myalgic encephalomyelitis, or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) — laid on the sidewalk holding signs.

"We are sick and disabled with ME/CFS and Long COVID but we are here today, putting our bodies on the line, to tell President Biden that the pandemic is not over, that millions of us are being disabled from post-viral disease, and we need urgent action from our government," demonstrator and MEAction advocacy director Ben HsuBorger said in a statement. "We are calling on President Biden to declare ME/CFS and Long COVID a national emergency."

Long COVID is a term used to describe patients who still suffer from virus-like symptoms that can last for weeks or months after initial infection. ME/CFS is a chronic disease that can be contracted after a COVID-19 diagnosis.

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According to MEAction, ME/CFS symptoms leave 75 percent of those with the disease unable to work and 25 percent bed-bound.

Demonstrators also demanded investments in research, public education, access to treatments, and economic support for patients with long COVID-19 symptoms. And they asked the administration to continue proven methods for limiting the spread of COVID-19, such as distribution of high-quality masks and sustained federal funding for vaccinations and virus testing.

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MEAction's protest comes as a response to President Biden's remarks during an interview where he declared that the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

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Biden's remarks to CBS News correspondent Scott Pelley drew heat from public health experts and lawmakers, who said he was undermining ongoing efforts to roll out booster shots and secure ongoing funding for testing and treatment.

"We still have a problem with COVID," Biden said in the interview. "We're still doing a lotta work on it. It's — but the pandemic is over. if you notice, no one's wearing masks. Everybody seems to be in pretty good shape. And so I think it's changing. And I think this is a perfect example of it."

Although the U.S.'s COVID-19 vaccination rate amongst adults is still at 67 percent, the country is still averaging more than 400 daily deaths from COVID-19, according to New York Times data.

MEAction activist Claudia Carrera, who was diagnosed with ME/CFS, said in a statement that Biden is neglecting individuals like her, noting that minorities and patients who live in low-income communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

"COVID death and disability continues to heavily impact Black, Latine, Indigenous and low-income communities. We are not in 'pretty good shape,' and we will not forget that President Biden is throwing us away with his denial of the pandemic," Carrera said.

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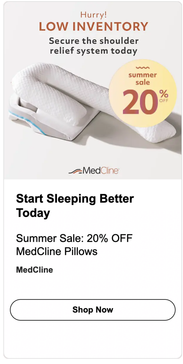

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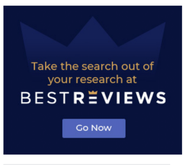

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